

THE VESPA V100 SPORT IN DETAIL

This has to be one of the oddest Vespas to come out of Pontedera. Details are scarce, it is hard to work out exactly what it is, and harder still to fathom why it even exists. The frame of this Vespa is essentially that of the rare electric start version of the 50 Special that sold a mere 3000 or so units in 1969-72. It differs from the myriad of other “Smallframe” Vespas in as much as there is a large detachable panel in the left hand integral “blister”. This was used to house an over-sized battery to run the starter motor in its original application. As a V100 Sport the space was used for a twelve-volt battery to operate the direction indicators – everything else running on just six volts as usual.

But why all this complication? After all U S spec Vespas had been fitted with six volt indicators for several years, and those sold in Germany had had the same since 1960. It seems that the flashers on American machines did not function well on six volts, and the German Vespas had only one on each side – thus needing less power to operate them. It is certainly true that when the P Range came out, the indicator version had twelve volts from day one. The V100 Sport could have been an attempt to provide a model with decently functioning indicators.

None of this, though, is really enough to explain why this one model should suddenly appear in America in 1980 using an old frame design and a bodge-up of an electrical system. Surely this couldn't be a case of Pontedera trying to find an excuse to use up a stock of electric start 50 Special frames from almost a decade before, could it? Sales were not good (it was competing with the rather better Primavera), and the following year the market for all Vespas collapsed Stateside anyway. No doubt this was the reason for a consignment of V100 Sports (all finished in green or beige) landing in Britain in 1981 complete with American spec lighting.

They were never popular, the electrics predictably causing headaches for everyone. One imagines that Douglas had their arm twisted by Piaggio since this model did not fit neatly into the UK line up. There was, after all, always at least one better Vespa in the range at a comparable price. However, one person has attempted to restore a V100 Sport, and this is the green example shown here. This picture is instructive because the registration dates from 1988 or 1989 and is most likely the original one. Dealers were “encouraged” by Douglas to take them, and unsold examples could still be seen stuck forlornly at the back of showrooms into the early nineties. If you wanted to keep your local dealer in good humour it was best to avoid the subject of the V100 Sport!

Though Piaggio don't seem to acknowledge this model at all as far as references in books and manuals go, rather paradoxically the Pontedera Museum has an unused metallic blue example as seen here. Of course, they may only have it because no buyer could be found when this machine was new!

It's easy to dismiss this Vespa as being insignificant, and in some respects this is true. But when considering the history of anything it is the flops that are least as interesting as the successes. The reasons for this scooter being built in the first place remain a mystery

to this day. Furthermore, the V100 Sport landed in Britain right in the middle of the Mod Revival, so a number of people have lots of good memories associated with it, and that's reason enough to record and respect this Vespa. Thanks are due to John Gerber for some of the information above.